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President
Therese Marie Cuny

Vice-President
Sister M. Angelita B.V.M.

Secretarial Office
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HOW CAN THE ARTISTS OF THE THEATRE WORK TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE A SUCCESSFUL PRODUCTION OF SERIOUS DRAMA ON THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL?

by

Sister Mary Honora, O.P.
St. Luke's High School
Plain, Wisc.

Sister Honora's achievement in Drama is too well known to need introduction. Coupled with this however, is experience and keen insight into the problems of teenagers which gives these views added value.

A big-name baseball player comes to the plate; and one of the seven possible swings he takes at the ball

- 1) raises or lowers his own batting average;
- 2) speeds or slackens his entire team in the great race for the League pennant.

A quarterback determines the signal; and eleven mighty men of the pigskin race are off to possible success or failure in a contest, the eventual outcome of which may well depend upon that snap decision.

A high school play director chooses a play; and he says, in effect, "This is my theatrical self-portrait — this is my idea of a good show."

**** The problem of selecting a serious play for production by teenagers is multi-faceted. For instance,

- 1) What is a serious play?
- 2) Are serious plays within the interpretative and the acting abilities of the high school actor?
- 3) If so, then, why are so comparatively few high schools attempting the production of serious plays, so-called?

**** With one down and four to go, let me be arbitrary.

Shall we concede that serious plays are: Those plays which deal with conflicts of sizeable magnitude in the main character —

- conflicts within himself
- conflicts with his fellowmen
- conflicts with the environment in which he must live.

These conflicts jeopardize, strike at his loves, perhaps, or at his hates, his dreams, his ideals, his ambitions, his self-respect, his fears or his securities, his personal integrity.

(Continued on next page)

1955 ANNUAL IN PREPARATION

The Catholic Theatre Annual this year will be combined with the Convention Program. Again under the capable direction of Rev. C. Herbst, C.M., present plans indicate that it will be even more attractive and interesting than last year.

Since this will be the 10th Biennial Convention, the Annual Program Cover should be something significant and unusual. Perhaps you would like to have a drama student or member of the Art Department of your school have the honor of having designed the cover. Any number of designs may be submitted and eligibility is open to all. The overall design should not measure more than and must be mailed not later than March 15. The Board of Directors will select the cover from among those submitted.

Many groups were disappointed last year because they were not included in this pictorial representation of Catholic theatre. It is essential, however, to adhere to deadline dates and this will be even more imperative to insure the fact that the Annual will be available at the Convention. Please then, do not put aside this reminder as so many did, only to find that deadline date has passed.

Each group is asked:

- 1) TO SUBMIT AN ARTICLE EMBRACING ONE OF THE IDEAS BELOW
 - (a) relating the activities of the past season and plans for the future,
 - (b) explaining some aspect of your production schedule; a problem met and solved,
 - (c) a novel or interesting approach to one of your plays,
 - (d) a new adaptation or some other information which you feel may be interesting to other members.

This article should not exceed 200 words.

- 2) TO SUBMIT A GLOSS PRINT OF ONE OF YOUR PRODUCTIONS

(Continued on page three)

(ARTISTS OF THE THEATRE Continued)

Note this: In these conflicts, whatever their origin, the main character, or protagonist, must quarterback his own game.

.... He must **judge** the situation — wisely or unwisely depending upon his sagacity;

.... He must **act** — nobly or ignobly, depending upon his courage;

.... He must **achieve** his goals — honestly or dishonestly, depending upon his personal integrity.

The point is: HE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS DECISIONS, HIS METHODS, HIS ACTIONS.

Whether he winds up **victor** or **vanquished** depends upon him.

A **material failure** may well be a **moral success**.
Note *Cyrano*.

A **material success** may well be a **moral failure**.
This is the issue at stake in so many of our modern plays.

Check Aeschylus or Sophocles, Shakespeare or Moliere or Sheridan or Barrie or Rostand; check such plays as *I REMEMBER MAMA*, *PROLOGUE TO GLORY*, *SONG OF BERNADETTE*, *GREEN VALLEY*, *VELVET GLOVE*, *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*, *EVE OF ST. MARK*, *MAGNIFICENT YANKEE*, *OUTWARD BOUND*, *BARRETTS OF WIMPOLE STREET* (you can name dozens more), include plays like *DETECTIVE STORY* — the answer is always the same:

As a man sows — ultimately he should reap.

As a man thinks — ultimately he should act.

As a man loves or hates — ultimately he should be loved or hated.

As a man lifts himself by another's bootstraps — ultimately he should be tripped by his own.

As a man runs away from the pressures of Life — ultimately Life should have him by the scruff of the neck.

As a man takes Life on the jaw — ultimately he should have the "fightinest fighter" award.

But: **In real life**, that formula frequently does not work. You know it; so do I. So does the teenager who is testing his footing in the world of the grown-up.

That is why we go to see a good play — a play in which the relationships of **cause to effect**, of **thought to act**, of **act to consequence** are well-ordered. Things are as they should be; as our heart of hearts tells us that they should be. We want to see the orderliness worked out for us again. Heaven is far off sometimes, and often enough we lose the remembrance of that wondrous place where the scales will be balanced for keeps.

At a good play, for the space of a couple of hours, we refresh our battle-scarred selves; we re-establish

our sense of values; we re-create our spirits for taking up again the hazards of living in a confusing world.

We discover to our complete satisfaction that we have rested at our play — which is as it should be also. The Arts are meant to delight the heart of man.

**** This is not **Pollyanna**; this is not **Escapism**. The Sidney Cartons, the Monte Cristos, the Macbeths, the Hamlets, the Cyranos, the Becky Sharpes, the Barretts, the lags of literature and theatre; the Falstaffs, the Malvolios, the Katrinas, the Rosalinds are — in whole or in part — oversize reproductions of ME — or the NEIGHBORS!

How refreshing and satisfying to see the forest instead of the trees for a change!

Conversely, plays like *MOON IS BLUE*, *VOICE OF THE TURTLE*, *ROSE TATOO*, *THE ICEMAN* leave me unsatisfied deep down. I see a slice of life; perhaps I even cannot deny the truth in what I see — but where is the whole from which this slice is cut? Surely this is not the WHOLE? I'm seeing the **Tree** instead of the **Forest**.

Precisely here, I think, lies the crux of a good play — which Jonathan Corvin of the University of Wisconsin calls "the perennial warmth of a play."

Says Mr. Corvin: "The perennial warmth of a play stems from its power to suggest more than it actually states. The story is not in itself the thing; nor are the characters. Beyond the framework of the incident, and beyond the characters, the good play will offer us a larger view, a panoramic view of all places and all peoples . . . There must be more in the play than meets the eye."

Years do not make a good play; good plays stand the test of the years. A good play today will be good next year, next century, and for all the centuries thereafter.

**** Are serious plays, such as we have described, within the interpretative and acting abilities of the teenager? May I answer that question with this one: Who, more than the adolescent, is feeling, pulling, and tugging at the very Stuff of Life, to find out of what it is made, how it holds up under stress, how it wears thru the years? Who has greater need than the teenager of understanding that "he is the captain of his soul, the master of his fate?" Who more than the teenager needs to see how Life ought to be instead of how **Life so frequently is?**

If, perchance, you still question the ability of the young folks to interpret what they find in a good play, give them this assignment some time: Have them paraphrase for you these lines of the poet:

"A boy's will is the wind's will,

And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

(Continued on page ten)

(1955 ANNUAL Continued)

A cut will be made from this gloss print for which there will be a charge of \$5.00. We suggest photos that are approximately 4 x 5.

Since variety is interesting, one need not hold to these measurements exactly. However, a larger cut will obviously necessitate a larger fee.

Any additional photos that have merit will be considered for use, but the group will be asked to assume the additional expense entailed.

Each group is strongly urged to send in a photo which will illustrate the highest calibre of work.

The editor of the Annual reserves the right to reject any photos which will not measure up to the standards which the Conference has established in previous Annuals.

On the back of each photo, print clearly

- a) name of the organization
- b) name of the play
- c) name of the director
- d) name of the scenic designer

Those who are engaged in Childrens' or Community Theatre may submit an additional article on that phase of activity, stressing aims and modes of presentation.

The Annual will be sold for \$1.00 a copy. Needless to say, this charge does not begin to cover the expense of publication. We are asking members therefore to try to secure advertisements which will help to defray expenses. The rates for advertising are:

Full Page	\$100.00
1/2 Page	55.00
1/3 Page	35.00
1/4 Page	30.00
1/6 Page	20.00
1/12 Page	10.00

A list of patrons will also be included in the pages of the Annual. Listing as a patron will be \$5.00.

The form below should be sent in with the article, picture, and advertisements not later than March 15th. Mail all material to

Reverend C. Herbst, C.M.
St. Thomas Seminary
Denver, Colorado

Annuals will be sent to those who cannot be present at the Convention. All orders however, whether mailed direct or to be delivered at the Convention, must be in by March 15. It will be essential, too, that check or money order accompany the order. We trust that members recognize the necessity for this procedure. The heavy expenditure incurred

in printing, handling and mailing make this imperative. We count on your understanding and cooperation.



A new membership directory is being prepared. We wish to list your name, address, school or group correctly. Will you then, check the mailing label used on this issue of CATHOLIC THEATRE. If incorrect, please notify us not later than March 1st. Otherwise, the listing will be set up in the directory exactly as shown on the label.

Enclosed is check for \$..... for which \$..... covers cost of cut, and \$..... covers purchase of Annual-Program.

Mail ☐ Hold at Convention ☐

NAME

ADDRESS

NAME OF SCHOOL

FAMILY THEATRE ANNOUNCES

For the first time since the original FAMILY THEATRE broadcast in 1947, a series of outstanding presentations has been released and made available to the public. Rev. Patrick Peyton, C.S.C. Producer of Family Theatre and National Director of the Family Rosary Crusade, has made arrangements for public and private use of sixteen superb half-hour programs which were recorded at the Hollywood studios of the Mutual Broadcasting System. The recordings are prepared on 16 inch, 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ rpm records and can be most effectively used in schools and by parish and community groups. As a powerful project in Catholic Action organizations and schools are urged to contact local radio stations and procure air time for the series. This presentation will provide sixteen weeks — four months — of programs which are devoted solely to encouraging an interest in, and a devotion to, Our Lady's Rosary.

Among those available are THE STORY OF THE HOLY ROSARY, a series of fifteen half-hour programs starring Ruth Hussey, Jeff Chandler, and Gene Lockhart and Ann Blyth, with Bing Crosby, Jo Stafford, Nan Merriman, and Christopher Lynch as soloists.

Another series is entitled MOTHER OF ALL. This treats of the apparitions of Our Lady and stars Ann Blyth and Macdonald Carey.

REGIONAL CONVENTION

This year's West Central Regional Convention will be held in St. Louis March 18-19-20, 1955. Father Francis Matthews, Mercy High, St. Louis, Convention chairman, reports that special emphasis in planning the program is being laid on practical helps for directors. An innovation on this score will be the one act play clinic. This will be a continuous clinic service running through two afternoons of the convention. Directors and moderators of this area are working hard to make this an outstanding Convention — one that will be of benefit and interest to all.

LIBRARY ADDITION

ONCE IN A THOUSAND YEARS by Sarah Weld Blake, in manuscript form, has been added to our library. The play savors of an intense archaeological interest in Anglo-Saxons. Action takes place in 1099 in pre-Norman England. The play, written in archaic English, is suitable for advanced groups only.

Costumes by Eaves . . .

Our 100,000 costumes and uniforms of every description are at your service. They are within your budget, they will arrive clean, and on time. Send us the title of your intended production and we will send an illustrated costume plot at no obligation. Your productions are our specialty.

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HIGH SCHOOL THEATRE

ETIQUETTE IN PERIOD PIECES

This article by Elizabeth Douglas originally appeared in the English publication, AMATEUR STAGE, Roy Stacey, Managing Editor, Vol. VI, No. 7, July, 1951 issue.

Attention to detail is vital to a good production. To get it, in period plays, it is essential to remember that each period had its own environment. All periods had their studied poise and corsets, their weighted costumes; they had set rules for everything — even nose blowing — but in each period the rules are different. Here, below are some of the special bows, curtsies and characteristics for different periods.

MEDIEVAL (800-1490). At this time, people were more rigidly divided into two classes. The keynote was chivalry, and the nobleman was brought up with certain laws of chivalry and to look after the people. The people were simple minded, religious, blindly believing in the order of things. There was a certain stillness. Good manners were a mark of character — the idea of bones being thrown on the floor, for instance, was quite erroneous. In fact, they were very clean, had baths and punctiliously set rules as the laying of tables, carrying things, washing their hands before meals, etc. The ladies walked with straight knees, shoulders well back, a high stomach, and head down. They take their front skirt in both hands — they can put it over their arm, and hold it back and front. When in the street, they must keep their eyes down, except when curtsying. The mistress of the house did not mix in the affairs of the day. Both men and women wore hats in the house until the middle of the 18th Century. The sword was worn only at wars; to put hand to sword was a challenge. **BOW:** Take off the hat and put it at one's side. Put one foot back. Take a small turn with the heel down. Bend both heels with the back heels raised, looking into the face, with body erect. **CURTSEY:** Put the foot back and go down perfectly straight with the hands at the side; and up again. The same principle as the bow. This is varied according to the occasion.

RENAISSANCE (roughly 16 Century). This was the age of discovery; it was essentially virile and alive. There were merchants, adventurers, etc. Get this all into the deportment, which had ease, grace and naturalness. The men were well educated, especially in part singing. The woman was now more the man's companion. She walked with her knees straight and the toes slightly turned out — a sail more than a bounce. Whenever the man takes a lady's hand, he kisses his own first. Swords are carried, in this period, into rooms. When the man sits down, he twists his sword round and leaves it by his left heel; he need not hold it. **BOW:** Take the hat off and leave it at the side. Take one foot back, so that the toe of the back foot is in line with the heel of the

HOW MANY CAN YOU ANSWER?

1. What actress is remembered for Peter Pan? Who played the role recently on Broadway?
2. Alfred Drake is now playing the leading role in what musical based on an old play made famous by whom?
3. What is the name for dramas written to be read and not acted?
4. Who was known as the Jersey Lily? Why?
5. What two plays by what two authors changed the course of drama, and shocked the 19th Century into rabid criticism?
6. In which city in this country was the first theatre established?

(Answers on next page)

front foot. Bend the knees and recover, looking at the person in front. The feet will have to be more apart with padded trunks. **CURTSEY:** With one foot back, sink down and rise quickly. Before going down, lift the top part of the skirt. The hand can be lifted to the bodice. The fan can be carried with the left hand.

17th CENTURY. This was more artificial. Good manners were a part of life. There was a rise of the nouveau riche and the dancing master in Charles II's reign. The dancing masters had a rule for every situation. Charles I, Cromwell and Charles II were all 17th century. We get a French influence with Charles I's wife. The ladies' dress was more natural — and they were more conscious of hands. Fans came in. The fans were a most valuable mode of gesture. It must not be just fluttered — it must mean something. **BOW:** Take the hat off and make a figure of eight with it into the other hand. Advance the right foot, bend the back knee with the weight on the back foot. Close the left foot behind, step to the left and close the right foot behind. Kiss the hand as you step to the left. Ordinary bow: Use half the former bow or merely bend the front knee. Messengers can deliver messages that way, kissing it first. **CURTSEY:** A little step to the right in second and close. Bend the knee and rise. Walk with held skirt.

18th CENTURY. Here we have elegance and steel with the velvet glove. People have complete command over themselves. We get the "picked out" hand with rings, the powdered head and the exquisite poise of a ship sailing. The fan can be carried with the palm of the hand with the fingers bent over it. Hats came off indoors and the handshake came in in the middle of this century. Snuff boxes:

(Continued on next page)

Lift the snuff box, with a loose flick, open the lid. Flick it to get rid of the loose grain. **BOW:** Step to the right or left and bow easily. Show the inside of the hat when taking it off. Simple bow: Right foot forward, right knee bent. **CURTSEY:** Put the fan at the front with the groove at the hand and the hand in front. Step into second, lifting the fan. As the knee is bent, place the fan in the left hand and part the hands slightly. On rising take it in the right hand and remain as at the beginning.

EMPIRE ("Pride and Prejudice") **PERIOD.** **BOW:** Keep the top stiff and put the left foot forward. Close in. First give a bob and then a bow with the arms straight in front. **CURTSEY:** Place the foot in front with a pointed toe. Give a little bob with a little run into it. With a crinoline, give a straight knee bend and rise again. The dresses were demure and sweet and the skirt lifted in front.

Are you sometimes the despair of your director because props or costume accessories just never seem to get there on time? I know, she's such a fuss-budget! After all, a purse is a purse — why does she have to see it before the night of the play? Look darling, suppose you try doing a scene in which something as seemingly unimportant as a hanky — or as important as a revolver — must be out of that purse at a particular moment or line in the script. Create a short scene around such a situation and notice how easy it is to bungle, to have the audience watching the purse instead of watching you. Notice how split-second timing in its use can make it an effective prop and how misuse can turn drama into comedy. It isn't so much what you use as **HOW** you **USE** it that matters here. And believe me, darling, that requires practice!

And if you're a "he" instead of a "her," and the prop is a brief-case instead of a purse — well, try it! Oh, brother!

ANSWERS

1. Maude Adams, Jean Arthur.
2. Kismet. Otis Skinner.
3. Closet Dramas.
4. Lily Langtry. She was born on the island of Jersey, and Millais so named a portrait of her.
5. A Doll's House by Henrik Ibsen, and Mrs. Warren's Profession by George Bernard Shaw.
6. Williamsburg, Virginia, about 1718.

Send All
High School News Items
to
Anna Helen Reuter
1050 W. Ardmore Ave.
Chicago 40, Ill.

HIGH SCHOOL

● Almost a fifth of the entire student body of St. Agnes High School (St. Paul) belongs to Cue and Curtain Club and over half of these have joined the C.T.C.

Reports, demonstrations, skits, impersonations, and play readings are the agenda for their meetings, but the topic of keenest interest now is the ever-growing number of students intending to represent St. Agnes at the National Convention at Notre Dame next summer.

The group recently presented **THE PATCHWORK QUILT** by Rachel Field, and **SPECIAL GUEST** by Donald Elser. Earlier they climaxed the Marian Year with **THE PAGEANT OF OUR LADY** by J. Johnston and Aileen Shea in which two-thirds of the student body took part.

● The Verse Choir of Academy of Our Lady, Longwood (Chicago) will present Francis Thompson's **HOUND OF HEAVEN** on February 22 and 23. The choreographic and choric effects have been arranged and directed by Therese Marie Cuny.

Student-produced plays have been a weekly feature during the past month. During the coming month, this program will include **MUSHROOMS COMING UP**, **THE CHARM RACKET**, **A TOAST THAT WE CAN DRINK**, **THE GOOSEBERRY MANDARIN** and **IDOLS**.

The forthcoming convention at Notre Dame is claiming much interest and a student committee is already at work. Of the almost 200 students who hold membership in CTC, over half are planning on Notre Dame as part of their summer program.

● **SONG OF BERNADETTE** was the final Marian Year production at St. Catherine's School (Racine, Wis.).

A new venture in Racine is "**TEEN THEATRE**," a merging of activities by the high schools of the area. Up to date the productions, open to all teenagers of Racine, have included **CONNECTICUT YANKEE AT KING ARTHUR'S COURT**, **UNCLE HARRY**, and **SEVEN KEYS TO BALDPATE**. The latter was the contribution of St. Catherine's Players. Sister M. Anacleto, O.P. is the director.

● The Central Players of Central Catholic High School (Portland, Oregon) presented **THE BAT** in late November. Reverend Anthony J. Juliano was the director.

● A **CONNECTICUT YANKEE AT KING ARTHUR'S COURT** took over onstage at Immaculata Academy (Portland) in the early part of the year. Their next production **THE HEIRESS**, under the direction of Sister Edward, O.P. is scheduled for February.

● February will see five student-produced plays at Providence High School (Chicago). **JUST ANOTHER SATURDAY**, **THE GOOSEBERRY MANDARIN**, **THE SAUSAGE-MAKER'S INTERLUDE**, **THREE PILLS IN A BOTTLE** and **JOINT OWNERS IN SPAIN**.

CROSS COUNTRY CIRCUIT

The Tower Thespians of Providence have already listed a large number of convention registrations. The student-convention committee are enthusiastically pushing their program to insure a large delegation. Over a hundred Drama students hold membership in the Conference.

On February 15, the Verse Choir will be featured on a program which will include Whitman's OH, CAPTAIN, MY CAPTAIN, Stephen V. Benet's THIRTEEN SISTERS, Carl Sandburg's TO THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT, Sidney Harris' TO MODERN YOUNG WOMEN and H. Wing's THE ESKIMO. A skit WHO HAS THE TICKETS? will also be presented. Therese Marie Cuny is director.

- Long hours of practice paid off for Sister Mary Eda of Notre Dame Academy (Belleville, Ill.) and the cast of WHITE QUEEN, RED QUEEN when they were awarded second place and won five acting awards in the Play Festival sponsored by the Catholic Theatre Conference at Maryville College, December 3 - 4.

- MARY'S FIAT was presented at Maria High School, Chicago, December 10, 11 and 12 in commemoration of the close of the Marian Year. The Choral, Verse Choir, and Ballet groups participated. Sister M. Augusta was the director.

- Aquinas Players (LaCrosse, Wisconsin) not only cleared district, regional, and sectional competition with their recent production of THE DOCTOR IN SPITE OF HIMSELF, but finally went on to the State Contest where they were the only school to have received an A rating from all three judges. It is also interesting to note that out of some 100 schools entering this competition, the seven Catholic schools entered all rated an A.

- A MESSAGE FROM KHUFU and THE RANSOM OF THE RED CHIEF were presented in January by The Cuesters of Rockhurst High School (Kansas City, Mo.) under the direction of Jerome Stark.

CHILDREN'S THEATRE

- The Children's Educational Theatre of Maryland presented Charlotte Chorpenning's INDIAN CAPTIVE in late January. Four casts of children between the ages of 8 and 16 from the theatre's two branches participated.

On February 11, 12 and 13 the Pikesville Branch will present THE WIZARD OF OZ. Frances Carey Bowen directs the group.

- THE INDIAN CAPTIVE will be presented as the Children's Theatre play of College of St. Catherine (St. Paul) on February 18, 19, and 20. Mabel Frey is the director.

COMMUNITY THEATRE

- SEVEN MIRRORS is reported to have been a tremendous success as produced by the Catholic Theatre Guild (Evansville, Indiana).

At the present time, HIGH GROUND is claiming the attention of this group, scheduled for presentation in early March.

On January 20th, The Guild sponsored a presentation of JULIUS CAESAR by The Players, Inc. Reverend C. Schoettelkotte is moderator.

- On November 5, 6, and 7, The Catholic Theatre Guild of Northern Kentucky presented THE RED MILL. A. B. Moorman is president of the Guild.

COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY

- Marylhurst College (Oregon) staged OUR TOWN as their major production during the first half of the year. GLASS MENAGERIE has been chosen for the major production of the next half. Miss Jean Sharfenburg directs.

- Henri Gheon's THE COMEDIAN is the March production of Catholic University Players (Washington, D.C.) It will run March 11 til 26.

- Mount Mary College (Milwaukee) opened its beautiful new auditorium recently. MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM was the play and, from reports on all sides, the acting and the production made it truly a "spectacular." Directors who must work with bare essentials on their stages looked with envy at the highly efficient and effective equipment — from the lighting panel to the floor with its elevator which brought Titania up in effectively fantastic fashion. Sister M. Hyacinth, S.S.N.D. is the director of the department.

- SEVEN NUNS AT LAS VEGAS was presented at Mt. St. Scholastica (Kansas City, Missouri). Introducing the style of DRAMA QUARTETTE, students are now preparing Fry's THOR WITH ANGELS. Sister M. Janice, O.S.B. directs the reading.

- THE TRAVELING MAN, Lady Gregory's little Miracle play, was presented by the Rockhurst College Players (Kansas City, Mo.) under the direction of Ken Lyman.

"The time has come to look hard at the miracle of television — and to do some thinking."

THE GHOST WORE A NIGHTIE

By Dr. Norbert J. Hruby
Public Relations Department
Loyola University
Chicago, Ill.

That the same network which brings us **See It Now** and **You Are There** should have spawned the December 23rd horror-in-color identified as Charles Dickens' **A Christmas Carol**, is a phenomenon of the schizoid television industry.

If you were fortunate on the eve of Christmas Eve between 7:30 and 8:30 p.m., you were wrapping gifts or putting the kids to bed or, for that matter, debating traffic ordinances with Officer Muller. But, if you were like me, you were sitting before your television set, viewing with growing alarm what CBS obviously believes is the answer to NBC's annual program, **Amahl and the Night Visitors**. For there, unfolding before your eyes — in forty-seven beautiful natural colors, yet — was a production that had to be seen to be fully disbelieved.

Interested in the particulars of the indictment? They follow:

(1) Dickens' wonderful fable, abridged not quite beyond recognition, was converted into a musical comedy. No, not an opera or an operetta, but a musical comedy!

(2) Maxwell Anderson, who in his declining years is finally willing to admit that he is not Shakespeare, attacked Dickens' prose as though he were whomping up a musical comedy book for Mary Martin.

(3) But the pay-off was the Ghost of Christmas Past. You recall, perhaps, how Dickens described the Ghost: "Now a thing with one arm, now with one leg, now with twenty legs; now a pair of legs without a head, now a head without a body." But that ain't the way CBS saw it! The Ghost of Christmas Past, so help me, was played by a Hollywood starlet named Sally Fraser who wore, I swear it, a filmy nightie cut down to here!

By way of partial amelioration (and also by way of showing that charity is not quite dead in my heart), I should add that Frederic March as Scrooge and Basil Rathbone as Marley's Ghost played their roles manfully and with little show of the embarrassment they must have felt for participating in such a charade.

Now it could be argued that CBS, overwrought and in the throes of Madison Avenue-type Christmas cheer, must have concocted this sweetmeat on the spur of a Martini — but that doesn't happen to be the case. As a matter of historical fact, CBS began

work on this Christmas confection 'way back when the first crocus was poking its head into this uncertain world last March. At that time, several deep thinkers, representing the network and the ad agency which handles the juicy Chrysler account, went into a seance and came up with someone else's idea — a reasonably normal procedure on Madison Avenue.

The idea was Bernard Hermann's. Now, Mr. Hermann is entitled to have ideas good enough to be borrowed, inasmuch as he once won an Oscar. Well, anyway, Mr. Hermann's idea was to make an opera out of the Dickens story. But the TV boys, abetted by the ad boys, knew that would look as though NBC were smarter — NBC having already produced Gian-Carlo Menotti's Christmas opera, the aforesaid **Amahl**. So the original idea was improved upon. Instead, **A Christmas Carol** would be revamped into a real Hollywood-type musical, complete with a yummy romantic ballad called — but there's no need to get that historical!

And so **Carol** went into the mill: the show was cast; a forty-five-piece symphony orchestra and the sixteen-voice Roger Wagner Chorale were rounded up; and Mr. Hermann dashed off a musical score, including eight songs, in twenty-one days. (It would be ungrateful to say that the score sounded that way, so it will not be said.) Set and costume designers did their mightiest with the suggestions contained in Dickens' richly pictorial account of nineteenth-century London, even down to that kind of breathtaking attention to detail which makes Hollywood even more wonderful than German scholarship in **Beowulf**. Example: every book in a bookstore window on the street outside the office of Scrooge and Marley bore a title which antedated 1843, the year Dickens published the **Carol** — yet the viewer never sees the titles of these books!

Finally, in October, all this was committed to film at a cost reliably estimated at \$300,000.

If that statistic doesn't stagger you, consider the fact that NBC's series of thirty-three not-so-spectaculars will have cost about \$25,000,000, when completed. And even more awesome is the million dollars spent on General Electric's four-network, one-shot paean to the American genius (which came out to be equal parts of the boozily cosmic, the cozily comic, and sex). It really makes very little difference, I suppose, if large corporations want to squander vast sums of money, but when that money pays for entertainment that, at best, abases the popular taste and affronts the intelligence, then the time has come to look long and hard at the miracle of television — and to do some thinking.

It would be hard to find a better argument for educational television than things like CBS's **A Christmas Carol**: the \$300,000 spent for that one-hour program would have supported WTTW, Chicago's educational television station-to-be, for one whole year!

BROADWAY IN REVIEW

ANASTASIA — Absorbing drama of a venal White Russian General and his accomplices who form a fraudulent syndicate to exploit the rescue of the Grand Duchess Anastasia from the massacre of the Imperial family in Ekaterinberg and how their game is foiled by the real princess. The scene between Viveca Lindfors as Anastasia and Leontovich as the Dowager Empress has made stage history. At the Lyceum.

BAD SEED — Exceedingly painful argument for the power of heredity over environment, in which a young mother discovers that the stigma of her own mother has been passed on to her own little girl of eight — a criminal without compassion. The final scene is without doubt unmatched for sardonic horror. Dramatized by Maxwell Anderson with Nancy Kelly. At the 46th Street.

HOUSE OF FLOWERS — A musical set in the West Indies by Truman Capote and Harold Arlen — so indecent that I left within ten minutes. At the Alvin.

LUNATICS AND LOVERS — Sad to say Dennis King is appearing in this farce by Sidney Kingsley which is not only cheap, trite and vulgar but very dull. Again I made for an exit. At the Broadhurst.

MRS. PATTERSON — Eartha Kitt, as the ambitious little daughter of a poor washerwoman, revels in a dream world where she is her mother's socially prominent employer, but the real life scenes are much better than the dream sequence. Miss Kitt's picanniny is a creation and, of course, she has some songs. At National.

THE FLOWERING PEACH — Clifford Odets' dramatization of Genesis features the Noahs as a Yiddish family so cantankerous that they drive Noah to tipping even before the Ark's landing, but as played by Menascha Skulnik the patriarch is a very appealing character and Mrs. Noah, a sympathetic matriarch. Mr. Odets suggests it was the angels who herded the animals in pairs. At the Belasco.

THE SAINT OF BLEECKER STREET — Gian-Carlo Menotti's finest opera is set in New York's oldest Italian quarter and includes a procession to Old St. Patrick's; a juke-box wedding party; a scene in the subway; Aninna's vision of the Passion and her stigmata; and her receiving the veil under special dispensation in her home when she is dying. A young but exceptional cast does credit to Menotti's great work. At the Broadway.

WITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTION — A Gilbert Miller production of Agatha Christie's thriller supremely well played by Francis Sullivan, Patricia Jessel and Gene Lyons and Una O'Connor in one of her best creations. Breathless surprise ending. At the Henry Miller.

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

The death of Father D. A. Lord, S.J. strikes a sad note and yet a happy one, — sad for the many who will never know this man who was such a remarkable combination of so many talents and virtues, — happy, because those of us who knew him rejoice to know that he has entered the eternal happiness which he has so richly earned — that he has personally met the Queen whom he has spiritually enthroned in the hearts of countless young men and women. The value and the far-reaching results of his work defy any attempt at count or calculation.

Catholic Theatre Conference members remember especially his great service during the founding days. Father F. G. Dineen, S.J. and Father Lord (what a thrilling meeting in Heaven that must have been!) worked arduously to make the Catholics of this country better understand their obligations in coupling their Faith with the arts of the Theatre — to better evaluate the great power that emanated from the linking of these two. We shall always remain indebted to his great spirit of zeal and self-sacrifice. His courage, spiritual stature, indomitable will, ambition, and Christ-like manner will always be an inspiration to those of us who knew him!

Have you ever tried closing your eyes during rehearsal of a play and concentrating solely on the voice work? Your audience uses its eyes of course, but the monotony or bad quality of voice-work subconsciously affects the ear and can bring an unhappy verdict of the play.



**** Why then, do so comparatively few high schools attempt the so-called serious play? In preparing this paper, I wrote to Dramatic Publishing Company, to Row, Peterson, to Dramatists Play Service, and to Samuel French play publishers for surveys of the types of plays most frequently chosen by high school producing groups. All reported the great preference for very light comedy. French's *Mercury Theatre Shakespeare* plays are reasonably popular. There is some limited call for Moliere, Barrie, adaptations of novels like *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*. Dramatists Play Service lists *THE CURIOUS SAV-AGE* as their most popular play on the high school level, even noting that several schools repeat the play after an interval of a few years. Dramatic Publishing Company cites *OUR MISS BROOKS* as their most-frequently-done show. French cries for more consideration of their *PROLOGUE TO GLORY* and *EVERYMAN* for high school production. All publishers groaned with equal distress over the time that high schools waste on claptrap plays on the pleas of economy, staging problems, and what-have-you.

**** I have arrived at the following conclusions from my perusal of high school production choices as they are regularly listed in the various theatre and dramatics magazines, and in the catalogs of the various play publishing companies:

- 1) Adults seem to think that teenagers do not have a serious thought in their heads, and therefore they cannot possibly understand, much less, produce meaty plays. Oddly enough, practically every "A" rating in Play Festivals goes to the production of a serious play. I might suggest to Directors in schools where adults fear full-length serious plays, that they give the audience an evening of one-acts. Group one worthwhile serious one-act with two inconsequential light comedies and watch the reaction. Try *SUMMONS OF SARIEL* if you want to test acting strength and audience reaction and reception.
- 2) Many youngsters think they want comedy or pie-throwing farce because they have never had the thrill of getting their teeth into a really good play. Children are quite content with lollipops until they have tasted candy bars.
- 3) Too many Directors are not really convinced that the better the play, the fewer the demands to be satisfied in staging and costuming. The best plays look fine in simple staging and costuming; emphasis is where it belongs — on the characters and their working out of their problems. Producing a play of high dramatic quality takes work, and good hard work to interpret, to understand, and to bring alive on the stage. When a Director is tempted to choose an inconsequential play because it goes together quickly, he ought to remember what Arthur Hopkins once said:

"THERE IS ONLY ONE REASON FOR PRODUCING A PLAY — YOUR CONVICTION THAT THE PLAY SHOULD BE DONE."

LENTEN PLAY SUGGESTIONS

FULL LENGTH:

- BARABBAS* by Ghelderode — MSS at Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois. (See Production Work Sheet of Feb. 1954).
- TOBIAS AND THE ANGEL* — Bridie — Samuel French Pub. Co.
- COMING OF CHRIST* — Masefield — Baker Pub. Co.
- THOR WITH ANGELS* — Christopher Fry — Dramatists Play Service.
- DESIGN FOR A STAINED GLASS WINDOW* — Berney/Richardson — Baker Publishing Co.
- TRAITOR'S GATE* — M. Stuart — French Pub. Co.
- BEHOLD THE MAN* — D. A. Lord, S.J. — Queen's Work Press.
- FANTASY OF THE PASSION* — D. A. Lord, S.J. — Queen's Work Press.
- MANSIONS (All Female)* — D. A. Lord, S.J. — Queen's Work Press.
- NOAH* — Obey — Longman's Green Pub. Co.

ONE-ACT:

- LUCIFER AT LARGE* — F. Ford — Baker's Publishing Co.
- BOY WITH A CART* — Fry — Baker Publishing Co.
- SUMMONS OF SARIEL* — M. Kessie — Dramatic Pub. Co.
- FOURTEEN PLAYS FOR THE CHURCH* — These are morality and mystery plays; some of them reviewed in Feb. '54 issue.
- TOTENTANZ* — M. F. Schloss — MSS. in CTC Library.
- EVERYMAN* — Baker Publishing Co.
- CUP OF TREMBLING* — Johannes — Baker Publishing Co.
- MIRACLE OF THEOPHILUS* — (refer to February '54 issue for information.)

**** The playwrights have written plenty of good plays within the range of the high school producing groups. Not only have fine plays of adult level been made available to high school theatre, but the playwrights for Children's Theatre have some splendid plays waiting for the teenagers to tackle. The problem now becomes ours, I think.

**** WHAT SHALL BE OUR THEATRICAL SELF-PORTRAITS THIS SEASON?

THEATRE OF THE SPIRIT

Sister Helen Daniel, S.S.J.

While the article below was written for Catholic Theatre of Rochester (N.Y.) its views re-echo sentiments that we feel toward Catholic theatre in its broader sense. We are indebted to Sister M. Daniel, S.S.J. for expressing them so concisely and effectively.

The signs of the times suggest the need for theatres of the Spirit. The lame are here, the broken, the distressed, and our generation is not unlike that of John the Baptist's disciples who told St. Paul that they had not so much as heard whether there be a Holy Spirit.

How is a theatre of the Spirit like other theatres? The primary purpose of both is entertainment; and an immediate objective of both is artistic success. But here, identity ceases. For the activity of a theatre group is conditioned really, by its ultimate object: what it does and how it is done are determined by what it wants.

A theatre of the Spirit differs from other theatres in its concern for souls, its desire to spend itself that others may be "entertained into" a positive attitude toward Christian values.

Who are the people who devote themselves to such a theatre? How are they different from those who are simply interested in the theatre for its own sake and for their own sake? They differ in that they are dedicated to Truth and Beauty and want to spread and share them; they are determined to safeguard and foster acceptance of Christian principles. They have learned not to regard acting or directing or stage craft or design merely as a means of self-expression and subsistence (Although there is little of the latter in commercial theatre either), but rather as a means of stimulating and sustaining others. There is something of a circular reaction here among these contributory artists: when everyone concerned with a production is concerned primarily with the play as a whole and its theme, the result is a corporate, a unified performance. But participation in such a performance so informs and sublimates the contribution of the individual that, while seeming to have surrendered his own spirit to that of the play, he has enriched himself and his art to the degree that he emerges from the production a more inspired artist and a more inspired man.

This is not to say that a spirit of good will and corporate effort will substitute for high standards of acting and production any more than piety will substitute for good playwriting. On the contrary, members who are zealous for the cause will insist on high standards in play selection, in casting, in directing, in staging. We do in fact, measure the stature of any theatrical group by their selection of plays and their standards of production.

Catholic Theatre of Rochester is a theatre of the Spirit. The plays it has done have "solved the problems that they raised in the light of our philosophy without giving scandal in the process," and its standards of production have been high. There is no indication that personal aggrandizement will obscure or distort their pure-intentioned artistry. They have interpreted the signs of the times and rallied to the cause of Truth. A lesser motivation will not claim them; a lesser spirit will not replace their Guide.

FESTIVAL NEWS

The LaCrosse Drama Festival is scheduled for February 26. The Festival may extend to a second day, the 27th. Brother James Luke of St. Mary's College (Winona, Minnesota) will serve as Judge.

* * * *

March 18, 19 are the dates set for the Spokane Play Festival. It will be held at Holy Names College (Spokane, Washington). Sister Matilda Mary is Chairman.

Ever try to close your ears to the voice work of your cast and to concentrate on just the stage movement, action and facial expression? It's sometimes very enlightening. Or make your players rehearse a difficult scene without the voice-work, mouthing but not forming words. It will help them immensely to spot any weakness in this facet of character portrayal.

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